DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 367 585 SO 023 766

AUTHOR Khoi, Le Thanh
TITLE The Role of Education in the Cultural and Artistic Development of the Individual.
INSTITUTION United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, Paris (France).
PUB DATE Sep 92
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the UNESCO International Conference on Education (43rd Session, Geneva, Switzerland, September 14-19, 1992). For related items, see ED 366 538-547 and SO 023 765-767.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Aesthetic Education; Art Appreciation; Creativity; Cultural Awareness; *Cultural Education; *Developing Nations; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *Individual Development; *Interdisciplinary Approach; International Relations; Social Change; *Technological Advancement

ABSTRACT

Cultural development is the development of knowledge, values, and attitudes bringing about the fulfillment of personalities and their creative capabilities. School in general stresses cognitive development and uses authoritarian methods to impose its view, thereby promoting imitation over initiative and critical thinking. School counterbalances the economic and technical tendencies of the dominant ideology and can promote international understanding and promote peace. Cultural development requires understanding of the past and present. Individuals should be aware of cultural contributions to their nations from other cultures. Such awareness can come through the study of all disciplines: literature, history, the arts, and so on. An interdisciplinary approach is necessary not only because it corresponds to the global character of modern life, but because the rapid pace of change requires teaching that brings about attitudes which are ready to adapt to change. Education should make students aware of the planetary interrelationships (economic, political, etc.). School should leave room for imagination and emotion, to foster the development of artistic and literary sensitivity and creativity. Only by moving away from an intellectualist approach will education give children the means to understand their society and epoch and to find their proper balance and create their own lives. (SG)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 367 585

ED/BIE/CONFINTED 43/Ref.7
Geneva, August 1992
Original: French

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION

43rd session

International Conference Centre, Geneva

14-19 September 1992

CONTRIBUTION OF EDUCATION TO CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

"The role of education in the cultural and artistic development of the individual"

by

Le Thanh Khoi
Professor
Université Paris V
France

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
FELICITY
NACE. REDDING
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

The ideas and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Secretariat. The language of the paper is that of the author and the IBE has assured solely the responsibility for its reproduction.

SO 023 766

THE ISSUES

I would define cultural development as the development of knowledge, values and attitudes bringing about the fulfilment of personalities and their creative capacities.

Applied to education, this concept stresses the overall development of the individual, both emotional and intellectual, physical and aesthetic, as well as in the domain of creativity. In all countries today the school is, to varying degrees and with certain exceptions, intellectualist: it stresses cognitive development and uses authoritarian methods designed to impose its view, and therefore favours imitation rather than initiative and a critical approach. The outcome is an imbalance in the child's personality which favours the conceptual rather than imagination and emotion. Furthermore, the school tends to promote its own culture which is the culture of the dominant group and leaves little place for other views of the world and of society: the West leaves little place for non-Western cultures.

However, a person's cultural development in general, and artistic in particular, is justified for a wide variety of reasons, above and beyond those mentioned above, such as the full achievement of all one's potential.

In the first place, each individual should participate in community life, of which culture is an integral part. Yet, culture is not only something you acquire once and for all, a heritage, but is being constantly renewed by everyone's conscious and unconscious efforts, through the action of its own momentum as well as by external influences. Culture must be given not its elitist interpretation of "the intellectual aspects of civilization" (which demeans oral cultures), but its anthropological meaning. I propose to define it as "all those material and non-material productions of a human group in its relationship with nature and with other groups, creations which have for it - or for the majority of its members - a real meaning derived from past or present events, a meaning which is not shared by other groups"[1]. If the culture is alive, this means that education should not only transmit a heritage, but should also take into consideration contemporary changes in knowledge, ideas and values. In either case, a critical attitude should be adopted, since culture, like any other social phenomenon, incorporates positive and negative aspects; society is not a homogenous entity but includes classes and groups with interests that are sometimes common and sometimes contradictory: what is a good thing for some may not necessarily be for others; what is negative now may later become positive, or vice-versa.

A second reason in favour of cultural action at school is that it counterbalances the economic and technical tendencies of the dominant ideology. To give an example, the economic logic of the capitalist system is an individual logic based on a comparison of the cost/benefit relationship, which does not take into account collective costs in terms of the exploitation of the work of men, women and children (in nineteenth century Europe, and in numerous developing countries today), all types of pollution, and damage to the environment. The pursuit of unlimited growth, driven by profit, and based on unrestricted exploitation of the planet's resources, the corollary of the conception of mankind as "master and owner of nature", has brought about catastrophic consequences: the loss of arable land, of animal and vegetable species, desertification and ill-health. In all this, formal and informal education have their share of responsibility if they worship the powers of reason without indicating the limits, and make society ressemble a working organization by spreading the religion of production and consumption as the measure of civilization and of well-being.

---

1. LE THANH KHOI, L'éducation: cultures et sociétés, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 1991, p.39.

A third reason in favour of cultural education is the contribution it can make to mutual understanding between nations and to peace.

On one hand, nearly all countries in the world are multi-cultural where numerous ethno-linguistic groups live side by side; sometimes they have already done so for hundreds or even thousands of years, sometimes for shorter periods of time: the latter case applies to Europe which, during the long period of industrial expansion following the Second World War, imported cheap labour from less-developed countries. Whether these minorities were national or immigrant, there were often tensions and confrontations with the dominant majority for economic reasons (employment) or social reasons (discrimination, racism, etc.). On the other hand, the world has become smaller and smaller following the spectacular development of transport and communication: television and radio are able to put all people in contact with each other at the same time. Meanwhile, information can be manipulated to arouse or maintain antagonism and tension according to certain political or economic interests. A better understanding between cultures will certainly not make them go away; but it may help to diminish them. It is education's role to make known and to explain these differences, as well as to stress universal values, aspirations and needs, the contribution of each people to human civilization, so that each person shall develop a spirit of appreciation and respect for others; this will represent a major step towards social and international peace.

These educational objectives should be directed both to children and adults. To children, because they are of an impressionable age and it is a time when values, ways of thinking and learned habits are most deeply internalized. To adults, because they are parents, citizens, workers, public opinion and leaders, and in these various capacities they exert a tremendous influence on the evolution of ideas and practices. Among them, teachers and adult educators must receive appropriate training if we want them to be able to carry out their work properly. The system will achieve its greatest efficiency when all the actors - learners, teachers, families and media - co-operate in attaining the same objectives so that the entire society becomes educational.

Intercultural education should not be a separate "discipline" but should be present in all disciplines. This is an opportunity to introduce this "interdisciplinarity" about which so much has been said, consisting of dealing with a subject by approaching it from different points of view.

It is from this perspective that I will examine the role of education in an individual's cultural and artistic development.

EDUCATION FOR CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

This development requires knowledge of the past and understanding of the present, two objectives about which it is not easy to agree. However, if knowledge of the past is necessary for someone to find their roots, an individual should also be aware of the contributions his/her country has derived from other cultures. Similarly, the present situation is complicated and the national and international are continuously affected by each other. Both of them have to be examined from all dimensions (political, economic, social and cultural) and in all their complexity, since there may be contradictions between these dimensions as well as within each one. A critical approach is therefore required.

In many countries (France, for example), so-called "intercultural" teaching is provided for the children of migrant workers at the primary school. In this way, it is designed to help them adapt to the education system in the host country, by remedying

their shortcomings rather than creating mutual understanding between cultures. Apart from the fact that the national culture is not presented (in fact, it's the "base" culture), the foreign culture is limited to linguistic and folkloric elements (cooking, crafts, celebrations, etc.) without being learned in a comprehensive manner, that is to say without incorporating these elements into the cultural system in which they arise and which gives them meaning. Neither is it situated in world history, in the dialogue of civilizations, in reciprocal borrowings and embellishments. Finally, no mention is made about different degrees of cultural involvement due to social class, age, sex, and geographic or ethnic origin. Culture is "fossilized". The approach is entirely Euro-centric.

The "difference" ought to be understood in a dialectical manner, that is to say as an interactive relationship between two beings, two cultures; and dynamic, that is to say subject to change. Every culture evolves through contact with other cultures and education should provide the individual with the ways and the means to make an enlightened choice between acceptable and unacceptable values. This means that a proper "intercultural teaching" should not be directed exclusively at migrants, but at the whole population.

World history shows us that no culture is "pure", that the greatest civilizations were constituted and enriched by borrowings from other civilizations. In Asia, writing, Buddhism, Confusionism and political institutions were imported into Japan from China through Korea. China had been invigorated by Indian Buddhism, as was Viet Nam and the two other countries. Islam picked up the Greek inheritance and conveyed it to Europe in the Middle Ages, while adding its own philosophical, scientific and technical contributions.

In Europe, the two pillars of any advanced civilization - writing and paper - are of Asian origin. The Greek alphabet was adapted from the Phoenician and passed on to Latin via Etruscan, and led to the origin of European alphabets. Paper came originally from Egyptian papyrus, then from parchment made in Pergamon before being replaced in the twelfth century by rag paper of Chinese origin introduced by the Arabs. In medical, mathematical and philosophical matters, Greece borrowed a great deal from Egypt, Mesopotamia and India.

Mutual understanding requires not only knowledge of one's history but, what complicates matters, of thought, of customs, symbols and values, in a word, of culture. All disciplines are necessary.

Literature could compare national and foreign texts on the same themes, study the masterpieces of any country to discern their humanistic meaning, that is to say their universal meaning through various forms of expression.

History and geography both indicate at the same time what does and does not change in the way man adapts to his environment, what he creates and what he derives from outside. Wars are explained less by leaders' personalities than by some of the structural characteristics of the economy and the society.

Artistic and musical education provide access to the rich and complex diversity of cultures and their aesthetic criteria. While polyphony is the universal vehicle of music, oil painting represents the most usual means of representing the world or one's self.

Teaching foreign languages introduces the learner to ways that the people who speak them think, feel and behave. They also enable us to understand our own language and our own culture better.

Science teaching should also include its history showing how modern science is based on the contributions of numerous cultures (zero came from India; algebra originated in Arabia; binary logic from the Chinese Book of mutations, etc.) and the scientists of all nations.

What is evident in the world today is the uninterrupted development of science and technology, typified by the media and particularly the computer, which has brought about profound changes in all fields. This has resulted in two demands: scientific and technical education for all and not merely for an elite; and the development of a critical approach since the flow of information arising from the media is so great that an individual could easily be overwhelmed by it and not know how to use it. The school should teach one to be active and critical in order to sort out useful information, to have an opinion on the content of texts, and to distinguish the objective from the subjective: a picture shown on a screen is not necessarily "true" because we could show an opposing picture, just as well as one could find two or three passers-by who do not express the opinion of "the man in the street" because they were consciously or unconsciously "selected" by the presenter.

Many children do not benefit from scientific and technical education since, in many developing countries, it begins only at the secondary level to which they do not have access (due to heavy drop-out at the primary level and very selective entry requirements to the secondary level). To counteract this, it is necessary to introduce or to strengthen scientific and technical teaching in the primary school.

Such teaching should be integrated. Scientific education does not consist of a series of nature lessons dealing with animals, plants and minerals. It should teach the child to observe and understand the surrounding world and present it as a whole, and to study the problems created by this world: why a tree does or does not bear fruit, why it does or does not rain, why there is a drought, why there is pollution, etc. The idea is to bring forth an attitude of observation, critical reasoning and synthesis on the basis of nature study. Some countries give "nature study" lessons at the primary school which, unfortunately, are based more on history and geography than on science and technology. The reason for this is that frequently the qualifications of the teachers and the scientific and technical equipment available to them do not allow it. However, some simple equipment could be assembled from local resources. Some countries have set up scientific equipment production centres (in Africa: Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia), an initiative which should be encouraged everywhere.

Obviously, integrated science teaching is more difficult that the traditional subject approach: physics, chemistry, biology, etc. Nevertheless, an effort should be made because the results are more meaningful and more beneficial. Subject specialization should only begin at the end of the secondary level.

Multi- or interdisciplinarity is required not only because it corresponds to the global or total character of the world, but also because changes are taking place rapidly and teaching should bring forth attitudes which are ready to adapt to change: this adaptability is more evident on the basis of general and interdisciplinary education than on teaching by discipline. Such education should counterbalance and complete the increasing trend towards specialization resulting from scientific and technological development.

Interdisciplinarity should not take place exclusively within the exact and natural sciences, but also between these and the human and social sciences. To study, understand and solve the world's major problems requires interdisciplinarity: hunger, poverty, ignorance, sickness, the eco-system. Hunger, for example, is often not due to lack of food, but to poverty, exploitation, the profit motive (the replacement of food

crops by commercial farming for export), to natural disasters (drought, floods, etc.). The solution will not be found without measures that are economic and social and without employing the outcomes of scientific research (particularly bio-technology).

A common concern among developed and developing countries is that of the environment, or rather the eco-system, in other words the relationship between man and his surroundings. If we have already been concerned about industrial and urban waste for some time, it was in the 1970s in the industrialized countries and more recently in developing countries that an ecological conscience came to the fore which no longer viewed these problems as the consequences of growth but as those that may lead to the destruction of the planet. Ecological education is directed to children and adults to make them aware of this situation and to develop in them a sense of responsibility for the biosphere. Nature forms part of mankind's common heritage.

Finally, education should make us aware of other inter-relationships (economic, political, etc.) on the planetary scale. With only one-fifth of the world's population, the rich countries consume two-thirds of its resources, of which a large proportion is wasted. What they consume is drawn not only from their own countries but also from those of the South. Thus, exports of soy beans from Brazil for European livestock, meat from Guatemala, etc., take place to the detriment of land for small farmers and to the profit of the local landed classes and rich Western countries: they share the benefits through the intermediary of multi-national agro-businesses. In this way the poor are feeding the rich. A proper international or internationalist education should make Western public opinion understand that one cannot plead for a decrease in demographic growth in the South without modifying one's own way of life (food and paper consumption, etc.), thereby releasing resources to improve the situation of the poor.

Everything that has been said above assumes a certain ethical position. Ethics are an integral part of culture and it is not possible to speak about cultural development without ethical development. Are there any universal values? History and sociology have shown that a number of values are shared by the great religions (do not kill, respect your parents, help the poor, do not commit adultery, do not lie, be honest, keep your promises, etc.); yet even among them certain societies interpret them differently: for example, there are some that accept murder, stealing and lying in certain circumstances. Even so, while today all countries state that they are in favour of democracy and of respecting human rights, I am not certain that they would all give the same meaning to these concepts; even more so, does democracy have the same meaning within the same country for those who dominate and for those who are dominated, the exploiters and the exploited?

In order not to be excessively pessimistic, it seems to me that education could put forward a certain number of values on which there would be a favourable majority, if not unanimity: scientific values such as a spirit of observation and demonstration, and critical reasoning; social values such as democracy, justice, honesty, respect for others (both for their person and their culture), environmental conservation, and the struggle for international understanding and peace. But let us not conceal the difficulties of moral and civic education where daily practice contradicts the recommended norms: how do you encourage democracy when the laws are flouted? socialism when the theft of public property is a daily occurrence? and respect for human rights in a discriminating and racist society?

ARTISTIC AND LITERARY SENSITIVITY AND CREATIVITY

The intellectual concept of culture as heritage has turned the school into an institution for the transmission of knowledge via the teacher rather than for personal expression and creative activities by the child. As the "object" of teaching, the child is reduced to the role of a receiver of what the adult considers necessary for a person's future social and vocational existence, while he/she is in the first instance responsible for the future and is required to participate more and more actively in the construction of his/her being as he/she develops. Meanwhile, culture, as we have said, consists not only of acquired knowledge but is a dynamic entity which constantly absorbs and interprets all the new objects with which it comes into contact. Just as the school should be open to the national and international environment, it should also leave room for imagination and emotion, to the development of artistic and literary sensitivity and creativity. The teacher will no longer simply be the transmitter of knowledge but a mediator between the child and the world, who helps the child to discover himself/herself, to realize all his/her abilities, to live in pleasant surroundings, in harmony with one's self taking the environment into account, and to achieve one of mankind's basic needs - joy.

In this joy, art, in its broadest sense (in other words including literature), forms one of the principal sources. Education should not only inculcate good taste and aesthetic feeling, but also creativity, and the capacity to imagine, to express one's self, etc. What is beauty? For some time now we have no longer believed in absolute beauty. Beauty is without concept, as Kant said. We cannot define it because discernment is always individual. I do not know if the feelings that I have before a work of art are shared by my neighbour; it is purely subjective. And according to Valéry, the beautiful is "that which drives to despair".

All civilizations have tried to circumscribe beauty, to lay down the laws of beauty. It continues to be unattainable. Furthermore, it changes because our way of looking changes thanks to artists who have broken new ground. We are familiar with the adventure of contemporary art in Europe and its constant search for innovation. One of its breakthroughs took place with the discovery and reinterpretation of African sculpture. In an opposite case, the incursion of Alexander the Great into Asia influenced Indian art: the Gandhara region modeled Buddha's face on that of the Greek Apollo, except for the smile. This is why the relativity of beauty is incomplete. People from different cultures can still appreciate the same works which have met with general agreement.

In the same way, creativity is a very complicated subject. Despite innumerable studies, there is no agreement on its nature, the way it manifests itself and the manner in which it is carried out, nor on ways of developing it. Most authors link it to four abilities: fluidity ("to produce a large number of ideas"); flexibility ("to give very varied replies arising from different origins"); originality ("to produce ideas not associated with the obvious, the usual and the ordinary"); preparation ("to develop, to broaden and to improve on ideas"). These various characteristics can be found as much in scientific creativity as in artistic and literary creativity, but they may not necessarily all occur in one person, and the way creativity operates is not always comparable depending on the mode of expression (verbal, tactile, sound, etc.)[2].

---

2. H. GRATIOT-ALPHANDERY, Pour une éducation esthétique interdisciplinaire: objectifs, orientation, méthodologie, Paris, UNESCO, octobre 1983, ED-83/WS-79.

Even if we do not yet know which is the "best" form of education to stimulate the child's creativity, there are at least some interesting experiments from several countries which would enable us to gain some insights.

Poetry is the ability of words to recreate the perceived world by liberating language from its conventions and reinventing forms and meaning. How is it then that this subject bores the child rather than beguiling him/her? The reason is due to the traditional methods of "explaining the text" and "recitation", in which the former becomes a grammatical, semantic and stylistic analysis and the latter a formal exercise employing only the memory. What is really needed is to bring out the deeper meaning of works, the richness of their content and forms, and to resort to imagination and emotion, to arouse in the child the desire and the need to make one's own poetry, and to read for pleasure and not because one has to. To a certain extent, it is as a result of these feelings of rejecting poetry at school that adults prefer to watch television rather than read. And when they read, they prefer newspapers and detective novels. Yet, whatever proposals were made about the disappearance of the "Gutenberg Galaxy", the printed word remains the basic instrument of culture since it conveys the legacy of all humanity and leads to confrontation and criticism. Thus, it is the role of the school to teach lively and critical reading, both for the written and the spoken word.

Theatre extends and completes this education. At the same time it represents the real and the imaginary. It brings language to the fore but employs other means: the characters, the scenery, the lighting, movement, colour. All the senses are required to grasp the meaning of the dramatic text. The traditional school approach was an analysis and an explanation by the teacher; even if he/she asked questions of the pupils, it was through his/her own approach that they had to understand the author's message. They did not have to participate. On the other hand, an actual theatrical production allows them to express themselves. It not only brings the text alive but restores the rich communication flow among pupils, and between them and the teacher. The outcome is pleasure for everybody which could not have been achieved by a simple reading.

Music opens the child's and adolescent's mind to other aspects of the world, that of sounds and rhythms. The teaching of this subject should encourage expression through singing, playing musical instruments and dancing. This implies active and global methods (firstly practice, secondly analysis) and the involvement of the child in his/her own training. Music has the advantage of transcending linguistic barriers and of communicating directly with the heart. With the present audiovisual distribution system there is a meeting and blending of East and West, North and South: the child is brought into contact with all sorts of musical traditions beyond the local one, and enters the universal.

The plastic arts are more difficult to comprehend. Of course, drawing is taught at school, but the ultimate objective of developing the abilities of observation, good taste and imagination may not always be achieved, in the same way that the teaching of poetry kills interest in poetry. Here too, we must have confidence in the child's spontaneity for whom drawing is a natural way of conveying his/her vision of the world at each stage of development. This does not rule out the teacher's critical observations, not to pour scorn or to restrain, but to encourage creative activity and to draw attention to the beauty to be found in daily life. We know about the remarkable experience of Ramses Wissa Wassef (1914-1974) who founded a tapestry school in a poor district of Cairo where weaving frames were made available to children who were entirely free to create whatever they wanted. The vitality of the artistic tradition among these out-of-school young people led them to create masterpieces which the world immediately recognized as such when the tapestries were exhibited for the first time in Basel in 1958.

This experience also shows that cultural and artistic education depend less on materials than on an educational approach which places confidence on both the creativity of the child and the teacher. There is nowhere, even in poverty, where one does not find resources capable of arousing the abilities of observation, logic and invention among children. I will only mention the game (called awélé among the Baoulé, but also found throughout Africa and in a large part of Asia) which consists of distributing seeds in two to four rows of boxes and which provides an introduction to numerous mathematical principles. Even the meanings contained in fairy stories and proverbs find there origins in a certain socio-cultural and universal context.

In conclusion, the school should move away from an exclusively intellectualist approach which has been up till now its choice and must find again its basic vocation which is the realization of the child's abilities by enriching them with all the planet's resources. This is the only way that the school will give children the means of understanding their society and epoch, but also to find their proper balance and to create their own life.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABDALLAH-PRETCEILLE, M. Vers une pédagogie interculturelle, 2e éd. Publications de la Sorbonne, juin 1990.

ABDEL MALEK, A. et A.N. PANDEYA, eds. Intellectual creativity in endogenous culture. Tokyo, The United Nations University, 1981.

CAMILLERI, C. Anthropologie culturelle et éducation. Paris-Lausanne, Bureau international d'éducation - UNESCO - Delachaux et Niestlé, 1984.

DESMEUZES, J. L'action culturelle à l'école, Paris, Enfance heureuse, 1986.

GRATIOT ALPHANDERY, H. Pour une éducation esthétique interdisciplinaire: objectifs, orientation, méthodologie. Paris, UNESCO, Octobre 1983, ED-83/WS-79.

LE THANH KHOI, L'education: cultures et sociétés, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 1991; Culture, créativité et développement, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1992; et al. Culture et développement, Revue Tiers Monde (Paris), Janvier-Mars 1984

QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

1. How can we avoid overloading the pupils' use of time when introducing cultural and artistic development into teaching programmes?

2. What are the problems to be addressed in moral and civic education?

3. How can a balance be achieved between one's cultural roots and an openness to other cultures?

4. How can local resources be used for education in favour of scientific and technical creativity?

5. How can environmental conservation be taught in a poor neighbourhood?

6. How can a critical approach to one's own society and that of others be developed?

7. In conducting a comparative evaluation of different experiences of cultural and artistic development at school, what have been the successes and failures, and why?